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Report on the Field Research Conducted in Netherlands, Belgium and
Ukraine during the Month of August, 2007

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Centre for the European Studies for providing me with the opportunity to travel to Europe and conduct field research for my research project on human trafficking in Ukraine. The information I gathered during this trip has not only made an invaluable contribution to my project, but has also entirely changed my understanding of the human trafficking phenomenon. I strongly believe that this field research will allow me to contribute significantly to the academic debate on the matter.

The major finding, based on the interviews I have conducted with representatives of counter-trafficking Non Governmental and International Organizations, is that the dynamics of human trafficking have changed greatly in the last several years. If during the 90's the phenomenon mainly included the trafficking of women from Ukraine into the countries of the European Union, now it also includes trafficking of men and older women for the purpose of forced labor (in construction, agriculture, domestic servitude, for example), and internal trafficking. In fact, I found out that currently the trafficking of women from Ukraine for the purpose of sexual exploitation constitutes only 20% of human trafficking. This dynamic is not reflected in Western academic literature that mainly focuses on the trafficking trends characteristic of the 90's.

Another major finding is that, in the opinion of most of the interviewees in the Netherlands, Belgium as well as Ukraine, the European Union is actually taking the problem of human trafficking very seriously and that the mechanisms it has put in place to fight the phenomenon are actually quite adequate. This finding contradicts the debate in the academic literature, which tends to be rather critical of the EU and how it is dealing with the problem.

A major change in the destination countries also constitutes a significant finding. As was pointed out to me by a number of interviewees, the major destination countries for trafficking from Ukraine have changed in the last several years. If during the 90's they were primarily EU member states, now Russia has emerged as a major destination and transition country, with Turkey following on the second place, and new member states (in the past also countries of origin) such as Czech Republic and Poland being roughly on the third place. Once again, this change is not reflected in Western academic literature.

To summarize, the research I have conducted during my stay in Europe has made a massive contribution to my understanding of the problem of human trafficking, and thus to my research project. Moreover, I believe that my research essay, that will explore the current trends of human trafficking in Ukraine, will help stimulate the academic debate on the changing dynamics of this phenomenon.